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The Chickenhawk Syndrome: War, Sacrifice, and Personal Responsibility by Cheyney Ryan, Rowman & Littlefield, 2009

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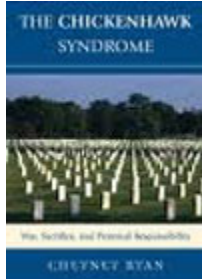
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The Chickenhawk Syndrome: War, Sacrifice, and Personal Responsibility

by Cheyney Ryan, Rowman and Littlefield, 2009

Reviewed by Harry van der Linden

In *The Chickenhawk Syndrome*, author Cheyney Ryan argues that we are living in a time of alienated wars. The American public typically readily supports its political leaders when they opt for war, but most Americans remain detached from the wars fought in their name in that they are not prepared to make personal sacrifices for their wars. The epitome of the alienated war are the Chickenhawks who enthusiastically endorse wars such as the recent Iraq War but fail even to consider to volunteer to fight in them or to encourage their loved ones to do so. Ryan claims that chickenhawks are moral hypocrites, especially when they are elected politicians, and he proposes the "Murtha test" for morally honorable support of a given war: if you are not prepared to risk your own life to fight it -or encourage your loved ones to do so - then you ought not to support the war. For Ryan, the real purpose of the Murtha test is not to end alienated wars as such, but to end all wars in a time when sacrifice for the nation has ceased to be a noble personal ideal for most citizens. This book offers a strong argument against the ready public support of recent American interventions, maintaining that it was morally shallow. The increasing replacement of American soldiers by private military contractors and remote control killing machines makes the concerns raised by Ryan all the more urgent.

- Harry van der Linden is Department Chair and Professor of Philosophy at Butler University.